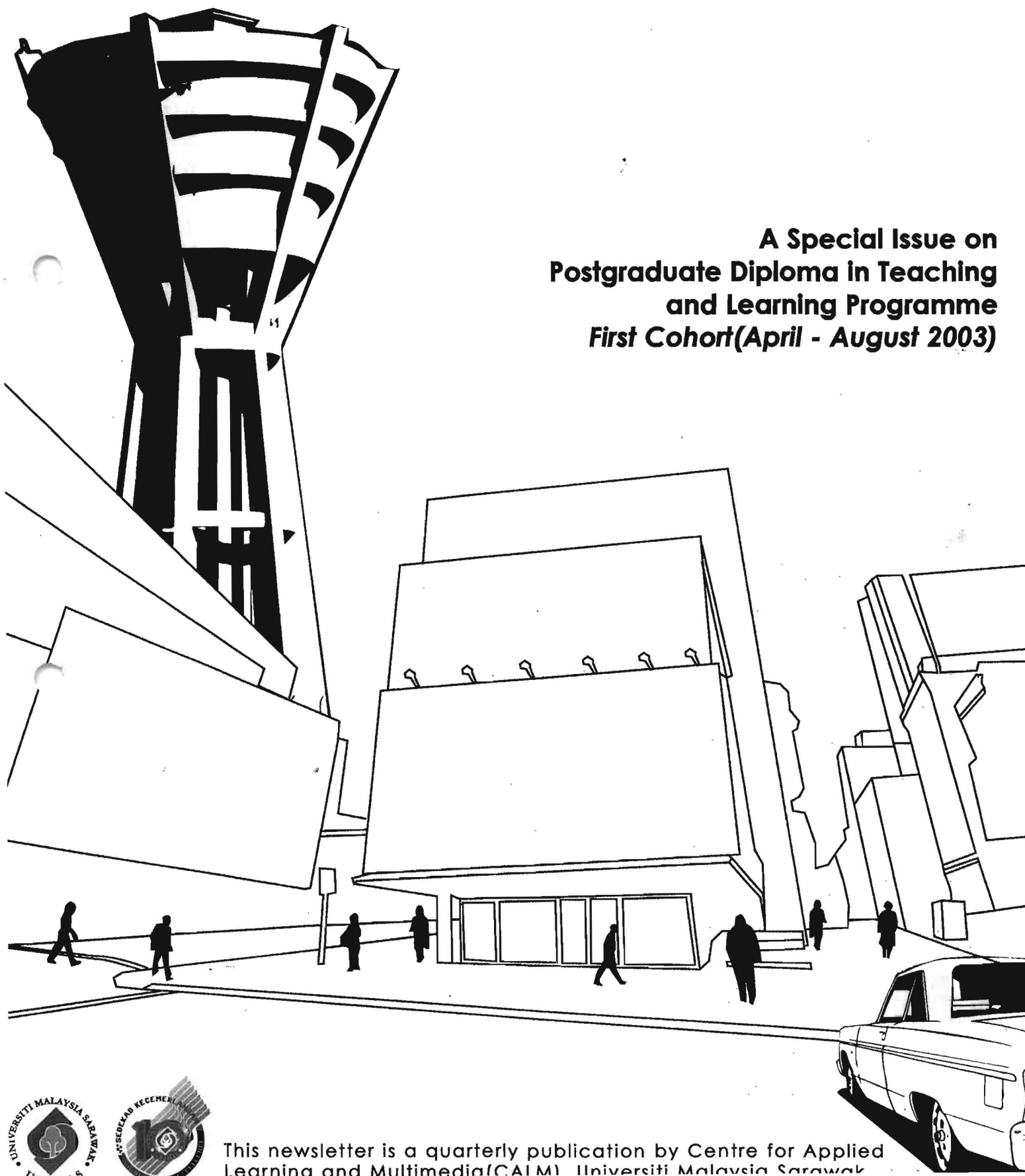


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Teaching & Learning Bulletin
volume **two** 2003

**A Special Issue on
Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching
and Learning Programme
First Cohort (April - August 2003)**



This newsletter is a quarterly publication by Centre for Applied Learning and Multimedia (CALM), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

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The focus of this second issue of Insight is very fitting to our motto of **"to learn, unlearn and relearn"**. Many of the articles in this issue are written from various perspectives on the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning program. As we are all aware, this program was launched in April this year for the pioneer batch of 30 participants, who were made up of academics from various faculties in Unimas. The program is designed as a professional development program to continuously upgrade our knowledge and skills as academics, especially in the area of pedagogy and instructional technology, so that we will be competent in our profession. Primarily, the objective of this program is for us to learn the 'how' of teaching, to unlearn our old ways of teaching, and for us to relearn the new ways of becoming effective educators.

One of the many ways that will help us to succeed as an academician at Unimas is to understand the mission of the university, the profile of our students and how our teaching correspond to the needs of our students. These are basically some of the materials that are covered in Module 1 of the Program – *Introduction to University Teaching*.

An interesting question that we should all ask ourselves when we teach our students is 'How Can I Teach You If I Don't Know How You Learn?' This question relates to what is commonly happening in our local universities, where traditionally, there have been no formal requirements for any study of learning theory in the background of the people that are hired to teach. The long standing assumption is that, if we know a body of knowledge, we should be able to teach it. Nowadays, this assumption has been questioned and challenged, and hence a more systematic effort has been taken to prepare our lecturers for teaching. Knowing how our students learn involves exploring the various learning theories, and being aware of differences in learning styles. These aspects of learning are covered in Module 2 – *Principles of Teaching and Learning*.

At the heart of a successful course is the design that precedes it. Good design involves several steps: identify the content domain of the course; decide learning outcomes; select subject matter, materials, learning activities, and teaching methods that are appropriate; and determine how to engage students in the subject matter. These materials are covered in Module 3 – *Instructional Design*.

Understanding the various methods and approaches of managing teaching and learning activities is considered the key to effective teaching. To become effective teachers, we must know how to motivate our students, manage the

Understanding the various methods and approaches of managing teaching and learning activities is considered the key to effective teaching

classroom environment, supervise our students, evaluate our teaching and develop our course portfolio. These major aspects of teaching are covered in Module 4 – *Management of Teaching and Learning*.

One of the most important aspects of a successful learning experience is the opportunity for the learners to play back to teachers their understanding of the information or processes they are learning. Through this opportunity, they can articulate their growing knowledge and receive correction, if needed, from the teacher. At the same time, teachers can learn how effective they have been in facilitating learning for their students, and they can use this information to revise their instructional practices. Assessment is an important means to continuously monitor student performance by seeing what students know and can do while they are learning, and it is discussed in Module 5 of the Program – *Assessment of Learning*.

Instructional technology is an integral component of modern university teaching. It is most beneficial when it is closely aligned with the teacher's instructional objectives. Used effectively, instructional technology can help to emphasize important concepts within teaching, stimulate student interest, enhance comprehension, and prevent boredom. The effective use of instructional technology is presented in Module 6 – *Educational Technology*.

Finally, Module 7 – *Teaching Practice* in this Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning opens an opportunity for the participants to practice what they have learned from the other six modules in an actual classroom environment.

We, at the Centre for Applied Learning and Multimedia, as the coordinator and implementer of this Postgraduate Diploma Program welcome any comments, ideas, and suggestions from all members of the Unimas community; on how to further improve the program. It is our hope that this program will play a major role in ensuring that our products and services that we provide to our clients, who are our students, are of high quality.

Professor Peter Songan

The Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching & Learning: Rising to the Occasion

Dr. Edmund Sim, UH Hong Kong edmundsim@hkust.hk

Since the completion of the first Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning (PGDTL) program, participants of the first cohort have been plagued by enquiries from their friends and colleagues about the program. Among the more popular questions are:

1. What have you learned?
2. Was the program tough?
3. Do you find the program useful?

To explain what we have learnt, I would usually cite the following instructional jargons:

"Instructional design, ADDIE model, Needs Analysis, Learning styles, Instructors' characteristics, Learning objectives, Behaviourism, Cognitivism, Constructivism, Piaget's Genetic Epistemology Theory, Skinner's Theory of Learning, Bandura's Theory, Bloom's Taxonomy, Gagne-Briggs' 9-steps of instruction, Multiple Intelligences, Classroom contexts, Item analysis, Criterion-reference tests, Norm-reference tests, Alternative evaluation, Performance Assessment, Instructional Technology, Salmon's 5-step Web Interactivity, Solomon-Felder's Principle, Kolb's Theory, Vestibule, On-the-Job Training, Course Portfolio, and more."

If the list does seem like a mouthful, anyone would be stunned by the fact that, in evaluating the learning processes reflected in all these concepts, the participants of the PGDTL program were assessed through more than 30 assignments (most of which were group-work projects), and six formal written examinations. All these concepts were introduced in the span of 12 weeks. In addition, subsequent to the teaching and learning sessions, all the PGDTL participants were evaluated three times on the practical aspect of teaching, via the process of *microteaching* or *teaching practice*, which took place during actual class sessions with the undergraduates. Indeed, though it was humanly possible to accomplish fulfilling the requirements for this PGDTL program was not a walk in the park.

There is no doubt that we have learnt a lot in the program, and the modules were a challenge to complete. However, how else would one sharpen her/his skills as an instructor in a university, and provide quality teaching, if the preceding and preparatory training were not comprehensive and complete?



Ultimately, armed with all the knowledge and skills acquired in the course of study, and the evaluation we undertook to ensure successful completion of each module, what was the outcome on the job performance for the participants? In short, how useful is the PGDTL program?

Before discussing the value of the program per se, let us look at what characteristics constitute a university lecturer. When we mention the word "lecturer", most of us will immediately think of the term "academics". What then constitute the role of being "an academic"? A brief search through the *Webster's Dictionary* reveals that the word "academics" refer to those belonging to an academy or university. An academy is a seminary of arts and sciences or a society of persons for the cultivation of arts and sciences. "University" means an institution for instruction in science and literature (arts), with the power of conferring degrees. To synthesize, I would say that a university lecturer, holding the task of an academic, would have to fulfill the characteristics of an instructor in an institution dedicated to the cultivation and instruction of arts and sciences. The purpose of a university is to produce graduates in the various disciplines, applicable to the working force of the nation.

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Yes, part of being an academic in a university means that one has to actively pursue research activity. However, it does not mean that teaching has to be marginalized. In fact the two major activities are mutually inclusive.

Once we are clear on the role of a university lecturer (instructor), we should then ask about the level of preparatory work that should be undertaken if one chooses this profession. Indeed, this leads us to the usefulness of the PGDTL program. Of course, no one may be able to immediately apply all the knowledge and skills needed to be an *ideal instructor*, upon completion of the program. The PGDTL program was also not intended to produce "super-lecturers". However, imagine the danger if one does not have any of these knowledge and skills to start with.

Personally, I feel better equipped now, when facing an audience of undergraduates, intending to share my knowledge and skills to them. I am aware now, that I no longer merely present my lectures to groups of learners. Students are not just "objects" or "statistics" in the process of instruction. They are individuals with varied mentalities, capabilities, cultural backgrounds, and learning styles.

Think about this – if we want to effectively teach them, do these students know what we expect of them, and do they know how they could fulfill those expectations? At the end of each learning unit or semester, I am able to formulate better evaluation schemes that truly seek to assess the success of the students' learning. Now, I am no longer troubled by the difficulty of teaching, facilitating and evaluating my students – one time in the past,

Once we are clear on the role of a university lecturer (instructor), we should then ask about the level of preparatory work that should be undertaken if one chooses this profession

such tasks were previously performed by blindly following the routes shown by the more senior lecturers, coupled with influences from personal intuition, biasness and prejudices, and through a lot of guess-work on the approaches used by peers on campus. At Unimas, our teaching force ranges from tutors with basic first degree qualifications, to senior professors with doctorate degrees and vast research output – so when one starts doing guess-work based on the practices of others on campus, he/she could become completely confused.

Does everyone need to take up PGDTL program? The answer is YES. For the inexperienced instructors (tutors and junior lecturers), it is necessary to progress from the state of *inadequacy to competency in teaching*. For the more experienced academics (senior lecturers, associate professors, and professors), the program is a great opportunity to perfect the skills that they were already good in. When we reflect on our role as an academic, and when we recognize our core business as an academic staff, being excellent in teaching becomes not only a duty to the nation, but to ourselves, in that we should "rise-to-the-occasion" in accomplishing our the tasks of a university lecturer.



Expressions From The Teaching Experts



The Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning initiative has received glowing remarks from three key figures in the local education scene. When interviewed, the three personalities expressed their views and thoughts on the current trends, the future, the changes that teaching-learning practices, esp in IPTA, have seen over these past few years. The three interviewed were Associate Professor Dr Yoong Suan, Associate Professor Dr Baharuddin Bin Aris and Associate Professor Dr Zoraini Wati Abas.



Dr Yoong Suan

Dr Yoong Suan (B.Sc., Dip.Ed., M.Ed. (Malaya), M.Sc., Ph.D. (Indiana)) is an Associate Professor at the School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). He had previously served as the Chairman of the Higher Degree Program. Dr Yoong specializes in psychometric, statistics, research methodology and curriculum studies. He has published numerous scholarly works in these areas of thrust, specifically on cross-cultural validation, statistics and computer applications in educational research, science and mathematics educations, and educational leadership.



Dr Baharuddin Aris

Dr Baharuddin Bin Aris (B.Sc., M.Sc., (Iowa State University) Ph.D. (Robert Gordon University)) is an Associate Professor at the Department of Educational Multimedia, Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Skudai, Johor.

Dr Zoraini Wati Abas (BS, MEd., Ed.D. (Northern Illinois University)) is an Associate Professor (Instructional Design) at the Virtual Education for Nursing Sciences, International Medical University, Kuala Lumpur. She is involved in designing and developing the online modules offered by the nursing programs.



Dr Zoraini Wati Abas

The three were in Kuching as guest lecturers for the Unimas Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning program 2003(Cohort 1).

// Question one

Could you describe to us your current portfolio at your university?

Dr Yoong Suan:: I am an Associate Professor of the Pusat Pengajian Ilmu Pendidikan Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). I have already retired from civil service but they (USM) extended my contract. Before this, I serve as the Pengerusi Rancangan Ijazah Tinggi - mostly for masters and PhDs, by that moment I was teaching some Master and PhD courses in USM. Before USM, I was at the Kementerian Pendidikan in the Pusat Perkembangan Kurikulum (1993-1999).

Dr Zoraini:: My immediate focus is to help with the International Medical University's online distance learning program for Nursing. My main task is to contribute to the design of the blended mode of learning for the program.

Dr Baharuddin:: I have been with UTM for almost 15 years. Currently, I am heading the Department of Educational Multimedia, Faculty of Education in UTM, monitoring both academics and multimedia production. Besides that I am helping UNITEM at the Unit Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran.

// Question two

The Academic Quality Assurance Unit in Unimas is offering the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning for its academics. Is the same program offered by your university or anywhere else in Malaysia? In your opinion is this a good step taken by Unimas?

Dr Yoong Suan:: Yes, we do offer a similar training, but we don't call it the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning. When the new lecturers come back from their studies they are expected to attend the orientation course for about a month. They are exposed to knowledge and skills on pedagogy and methodology, how to use instructional notes and how to understand and deploy about curriculum, testing and evaluation.

I was told that you call it a Postgrad Diploma and this is something new. It requires that your lecturers who do not have experience in teaching to get a Postgrad Diploma and I think it is the good step.

I think with this development you are in the right direction, even USM is moving in the same direction.

Dr Zoraini:: It is offered in various forms and ways in other institutions. I think UNIMAS should be proud of its decision to introduce such Postgraduate program. Many people assume that teaching is an easy task. It is more than that. Just because one has been in the education environment for about 20 years does not mean that one will be able to become an effective academic. There is a lot more to it.

Dr Baharuddin:: It is a good program, not only for UNIMAS but also for the other universities. From what I know, so far, I can't say that it is the first but I think it is among the few.

// Question three

What are some of the challenges that academics face in the Malaysia's higher education's teaching-learning scene?

Dr Yoong Suan:: It is a fact that when universities appoint academics, they are appointed on the basis of their academic degrees. Thus, they may be good researchers and they may have done a lot of research in their areas of expertise, and they may have studied overseas and learnt a lot, and they are specialists in their areas, but they may not function as well as educators.

In other words, university lecturers normally have no experience in proper teaching-learning practices. They learn from observing their professors and they learn from their own experiences, while studying or doing research, so it is assumed that they can.

Learning teaching skills is then a case of trial and error; some are fortunate to learn skills from good teachers, while some learn from their own readings.

It is good that the university is now instituting proper instructions and guidelines, especially to the fresh lecturers, on teaching-learning practices. This is not to force them to get extra qualifications but rather to expose them to various methods and techniques to facilitate the teaching-learning process because I think these are different dimensions that they have never encountered in their own academic field, things like understanding your courses and exposing to them methods such as sitting down and analyzing the kind of content; concepts required for teaching.

Knowing the problem itself (how student learn), the psychology of learning, the cognition process, the learning process and the theory of learning would help. of content; concepts require for teaching.

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Dr Zoraini:: Some of the challenges would be, the demand for a more meaningful education, to meet the needs of the industry, and the establishment of standards to ensure that every graduate is competent enough to function in a more demanding and challenging world we live in today.

Higher education today should not focus on the acquisition of knowledge alone. Among the valued skills a person should have include interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, good communication skills, a winning attitude and being able to work effectively in a team. In short, a person should graduate knowing what it means to be professional in his work, his dealings and in his daily tasks.

Dr Baharuddin:: Teaching and learning in higher education is not an easy responsibility.

All new lecturers must have knowledge on how to teach. Teaching or training our academics on teaching-learning techniques is a challenge to us today in Malaysia. Such training courses in which the academic can get a Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning would, in my view, create more committed academic staff members.

Another challenge is the impact of technology to teaching-learning practices. Flexible learning is encouraged in higher education. Flexible learning uses modules and books to diversify the learning process.

Now you can use ICT to aid flexible learning. We can use E-learning systems, learning modules and books. The challenge is to integrate the proper usage of ICT in order to teach effectively.

// Question four

As an experienced academia, what are some of the changes that you have seen in the teaching and learning for higher education?

Dr Zoraini: One of the significant changes is the enculturation of technology in higher education. I still remember how one professor commented that it would be a waste to expose Diploma of Education students to computers because computers will become a white elephant in schools. And, this was a comment I received in the early 90s.

It was not until the late 90s that technology; especially, networked computers and the Internet began to play a role on campus. In my opinion, the establishment of the Multimedia Super Corridor and the need to prepare a new generation of workers for a knowledge-based economy drove the change. Today, institutions feel the need to adopt or implement e-learning whether to support either its full-time on-campus students or to support its distance learning offerings.

With the Internet, both faculty and students today have access to a huge amount of resources online, including experts from around the world. This huge body of knowledge is changing the way we think, study, do assignments and projects. We are in a most challenging academic environment.

However, we must not forget that technology is only there to support the teaching and learning needs. It is a mistake to allow technology to drive teaching and learning. We need to be able to integrate technology seamlessly into the ways we teach and it is important for the institution to be able to support this.

Dr Baharuddin: Basically, we have progressed from using the chalkboards to white boards, transparencies, slides and video conferencing. Changes will come, and it now comes down to whether the academic can adapt to these changes. If you want to change, don't just change but change for the better.

'We need to be able to integrate technology seamlessly into the ways we teach, and it is important for the institution to be able to support this'

Dr Zoraini Wati Abas

// Question five

What are some of the changes that we might see, in regards to teaching and learning, in Malaysia for the coming years?

Dr Yoong Suan: Nowadays people tend to be more receptive to ideas and opinions. Academics used to think and act autonomously. You could write questions and nobody the truth of what you write. Now there is the question of accountability. This is something that we have to deal with.



The first batch of UNIMAS Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching & Learning Session 1995

To be a teacher in school, you will need a diploma; so to be a lecturer, in the university; you may need an Advanced Diploma in Pedagogy. This is to distinguish it from a Diploma in Education (which is offered to school teachers) because university teaching is quite difficult. This is to cater to new areas of learning such as online learning (as a new pedagogy) and learn new teaching techniques.

Dr Zoraini: I think it would be in the areas of higher cognitive development among students, and the smarter and more powerful use of technology will make the teaching and learning process more efficient and effective.



One of the class session conducted by Dr Baharuddin ABE in Multimedia Lab, CALM

Also, there is issues on the rising standards in education, greater accountability among institutions to provide quality education and the need to become quality institutions. However, the greatest challenge is in keeping up with the needs of the profession and the industry.

Dr Baharuddin: Based on my experience as a consultant to various universities, they are focused now on flexible learning concepts

whereby they want to encourage publications (books) from the lecturers and the use of E-Learning systems. In Malaysia E-learning will not replace the lecturers but rather to support teaching and learning. More multimedia rich content can then be used in building up the course content. E-learning would also allow the students to access these contents on their own without having the lecturer around. Even if the lecturer is sick, he/she can still be reached via email or SMS. There is no reason for the students not to be able to contact their lecturers.

At higher institutions, a lot of things can be done as long as there is full commitment from all parties involved.



'Kodak-moments' captured at the Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning (Session 1/03) Course



Asleena Helmi hasleena@feb.unimas.my

It is but a norm in society today, being more knowledge-based than ever before, that learning is indeed a life-long process. And the postgraduate program that we had just went through was just that. It was a process of unlearning and learning. The 'unlearning' phase was perhaps the most difficult as human beings, by nature, are resistant to change. However change is inevitable in our pursuit for progress. It is uncanny, or rhetoric rather, that as lecturers, we keep telling our students that learning is a life-long process. Now the tables were turned, and true enough, we had to 'walk the talk'. At first, attending the class brought back nostalgia from our own "old-school-days" again. The school bell would ring at 8 am, and we had timetables to abide. The only thing missing was perhaps our lunch boxes that we used to carry to school. The facilitators nagged at some point when we were being rowdy at times. But still as professionals, we knew when to listen, and we absorbed all the teaching frameworks and learning taxonomies. So in this brief write-up I would like to share with you, a series of the 'kodak-moments' captured during the program.

In retrospect, the emphasis of the program was not merely about the pedagogy per se but rather to develop a deeper ontological perspective on how we perceive teaching, and the process of learning should be. To some of us in the program, we felt that it was a time for self-assessment, and a chance to reflect upon our own teaching styles. A great influence in the way we teach is the formal learning process we experienced ourselves as students throughout our tertiary and higher education levels. At each stage, whether subconsciously or otherwise, we would emulate and instill the same values and teaching styles of that of our previous teachers, and professors (or, as Eddie calls them, 'sih-fu'). Nonetheless by now, each of us has developed our own style of teaching. The course provided a space in which we could review and essentially enhance these styles more effectively. I particularly enjoyed the fourth session of the course (CLM 5043) where at one stage we were given a survey to evaluate our teaching styles namely authoritarian, laissez-faire, authoritative and indifferent. The result was with a majority in the "authoritative style". Then you ask, what is the manner of

In retrospect, the **emphasis** of the course was not merely about the pedagogy per se but rather to **develop** a deeper ontological perspective on **how** we perceive teaching and the process of **learning** should be



ADDIE Chart presentation by Hushairi Zen from Faculty of Engineering



Asleena(extreme right) and her group colleagues.

this particular style? Well you will just have to wait for your turn to attend the second session of the postgrad diploma course, won't you?

The other favorite of mine was probably the second session (CLM 5023). At first, the module started off pretty mundane, with the intro to learning theories. As I recall there were two main streams, that is the constructivist approach and behaviorist approach. These approaches then later branched out into Gagne's theory on conditions of learning, Bandura's social learning theory, Miller's Information Processing Theory and the list goes on. So you can imagine a whole day lecture on these theories was enough to confuse us and literally tie our brains to knots! Nonetheless after preparing and sitting for the exams, we can now safely say we appreciate the knowledge about these theories now. They were especially useful in finding the connection or link between our own teaching styles and student learning behaviors. In this context, a "knowledge-value chain" was made more explicit.

Next, on my "kodak-moment" list is the session on "Instructional Design". We literally had to hone and polish our "drawing" skills, as we had to

produce a blueprint of our course design. I gather that by now, all of us remember Fitri's legacy on concept mapping aka the 'ADDIE' model. It was almost hysterical to see how some of us who tried to express their maps via fish skeletons and trees. I suppose it brings out the artistic talents we never thought we had. But more importantly the session taught us to be better managers, and we learn how to be more efficient in planning our courses.

In a nutshell the program was a success, and I think it did make us BETTER teachers – hmmm...allow me to rephrase that – BETTER LEARNERS after the program.

However there is the least favored session in the program, none other than the EXAMS! In general we all felt a 'slight pressure' to sit for the exams, considering they were scheduled once a fortnight, without ample time for absorption or further reflection of each module. Nonetheless we pulled through – thanks to all of our fast learning curve. Paramount to the course was the forging and close kinship among fellow postgrad-mates, especially we had the chance to have tea-breaks together for every morning throughout the three-month period. Therein lies the

gift of the program itself that would not have been possible, due to each of our own busy schedules.

In that regard, and I believe that all our course mates would concur, I wish to express our collective 'kudos' to the CALM team and all personnel that have made the program an unforgettable experience.



Putting Research in a New Perspective by Utilising E-Learning



Dr Andrew Ragai Henry Rigit randrew@feng.unimas.my

The idea of compiling data at one location such as research interests, and information on all academic members in the mechanical engineering department, and any reference materials related to research activities, has been brought about with the utilization of Quickplace. This initiative enables the lecturers and students to access necessary information anytime and anywhere. As previously described by Ling (2003), QuickPlace, hosted by Centre of Applied Learning and Multimedia (CALM) has opened a new frontier in teaching and learning process in UNIMAS. In the Faculty of Engineering, a number of lecturers, notably from the civil and mechanical engineering departments to date, have started providing their courses online as a supplement to their 'course files' as per required by the academic board of the Faculty.

The main purpose of compiling the research interests of all the academic staff and putting them in one place is initially to provide easy and quick reference for the final year students in the Mechanical Engineering department. With this access, the students would be able to choose their final year project titles, which can then be finalized by the beginning of Semester 1 for the 2003/2004 academic year. Every academic staff was requested to provide a minimum of four project titles with a brief abstract covering the objective and methodology of each project submitted. Each academic staff was then given a login name and password to access the Final Year Project (FYP) Website (Rigit, 2003) and each was given 'manager' access. With this access, they can upload and edit the pages in their sub-folders bearing their own name at anytime, from anywhere. The pages were uploaded at the end of March 2003, and the process

The editing process, however, is still ongoing.

The students, on the other hand, were given 'guest' access; they can read the documents but cannot modify them. Having read and understood the projects on offer, the students would then approach the respective lecturer to discuss the projects before making a selection. The discussions between the staff and the students has become more productive (as compared to prior inavailability of the FYP Website) as the students already know the background of the projects, and therefore, are able to ask more specific questions about their projects. This discussion process was initiated and completed without the printing of any project information, with the exception of an announcement on an A4 paper posted on the Faculty's notice board directing the students to the website! This arrangement could only be done with the availability of QuickPlace, the E-learning application which hosts all this information at one place, making it easily accessible to all students. The students can also post questions online and any academic staff can respond to these questions.

Even before the completion of the uploading of pages by all the lecturers, it was obvious that the E-Learning environment can also include relevant references to the academic staff and students (undergraduate and postgraduate) for conducting research. In addition, relevant power point presentations such as on how to conduct literature survey were posted in the FYP Website. Other resources such as past and present online courses (with their default login name and password), laboratory manuals, and the list of available facilities and software programs in the

laboratories, are also available in the site. Thus, the FYP Website has become a 'one-stop' center for information regarding research and research-related activities within the departments and the faculty. Another benefit of E-Learning environment is that it has become a means of informing

The Final Year Project Website has become a 'one-stop' center for information regarding research and research-related activities within the departments in the faculty

prospective postgraduate students, especially those who are still studying in their final year, of upcoming research projects. This information is especially important to the students who may be keen to pursue postgraduate study (by research) after successfully completing their undergraduate courses. The information in the FYP Website can also be easily utilized in future to create a specific website for the academic staff and for the department.

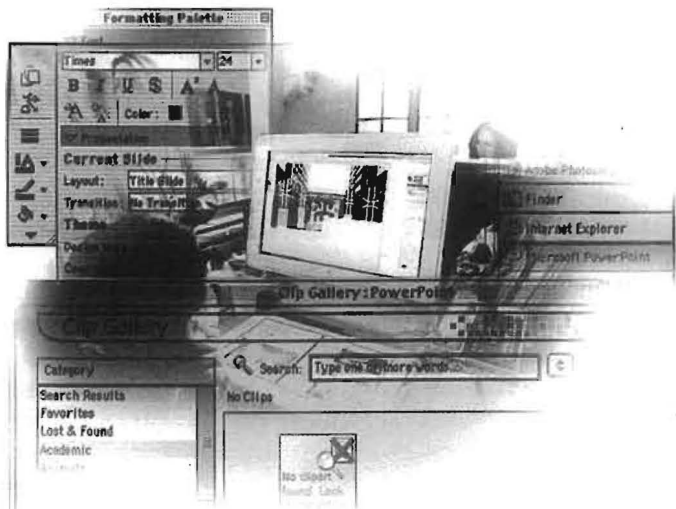
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Powerpoint in The Lecture Room: a Tool or a Bane?

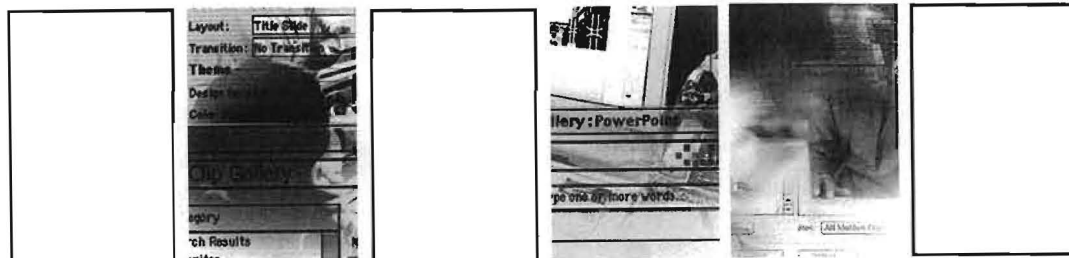


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One Friday, I was assigned to invigilate a PGDTL (PostGraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning) participant's practical teaching session. My supervisee had pre-planned her lesson well for the invigilation session, but luck was not on her side that day. Unfortunately she was not able to deliver her lesson as planned, because her PowerPoint file could not be opened on the computer! A familiar situation? Maybe. However, it gave us a feeling of déjà vu because, this same incident happened for the second time, to the same lecturer in the same lecture room with the same set of computer and accessories! Two reasons could be attributed to this failure – there is a virus in the floppy disk, or there is incompatibility between the operating systems used for the creation of the presentation file in the floppy with the computer in the lecture room. This incident goes to show that technology is not completely 100% dependable – if it has failed once, there should be some effort to investigate the cause of the problem, and some action should be taken to ensure that a similar problem would not happen again. This lesson's disaster speaks a lot about contingency plans.

Back to the PGDTL participant -- Without her slides, what was her action then? She could not carry





on teaching the planned topic – instead, the rest of her lecture was used for a quiz with review questions on the previous lecture. A lecturer well-versed with the content would have been able to continue teaching, and he/she would have made use of the conventional board-and-chalk to augment understanding among the students. However, this new lecturer seemed to be utterly dependent on her slides, without which she was unable to teach. Could she be a victim of the triple "P", that is, *Power Point Paralysis* (Teach-nology, 2003), or in other words, the over-zealous concentration on the utilization of PowerPoint, while concurrently disregarding its content and other teaching resources in the room? In this lecture room, there was a white board at the front wall of the room, and the screen for the LCD projection was pulled down to cover almost 75% of the white board. This situation reminds me of the words of James S. Atherton (2001), who said that "a lecture is the process by which the notes of the lecturer become the notes of the student without passing through the mind of either". I had no means then to assess the minds of the students, but there seems to be no mastery of the lecture content by the lecturer.

It cannot be disputed that PowerPoint has brought amazing changes in the way lectures are delivered – the colours, the sounds and the images makes classes very interesting and fun. Its animations, if used appropriately and in moderation, can motivate students and draw their attention. It caters to different needs of learning styles of, especially, the visual and

It caters to different needs of learning styles of, especially, the visual and auditory - inclined learners

auditory –inclined learners. In addition, through its animations, difficult concepts become easier to conceptualise. Its ability to connect to the web and other programs is an added advantage for a lecturer to demonstrate methods or to give examples. Besides its uses in a lecture presentation, PowerPoint can be posted online and it can be re-created as supplemental materials for self-reading, or as an interactive tutorial or even as a review material.

The importance of PowerPoint presentations in the teaching and learning processes at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences is recognised and acknowledged. For my lectures on "Respiration", I downloaded images of movements of diaphragm and rib cage during inspiration and expiration from the Web into PowerPoint. Unfortunately the image became 'static' in the slides, and I was not able to show the animation to the nursing students. Similarly, for my "Cellular Reproduction" lectures, there were fascinating images and time-lapse micrographs that could show the movement of the chromatids during the different stages of mitosis and meiosis in the Web. As the computer in the lecture rooms are not connected to the internet, an attempt to copy these images

into the PowerPoint slides lost these animated movements. When I had to resort to using transparencies, there was, undoubtedly, a lower motivational impact detected from the class. Without the animated features, the students struggled to understand.

Because of this recognised need to use animated images in our lectures, an initiative was taken by the Medical Education Unit at FMHS to organise a PowerPoint and Animation (Advanced) course, with the collaboration of staff from the Centre of Applied Learning and Multimedia (CALM). The short courses in July and in August were well-attended by a total of 50 participants.

As a parting note, we should try not to get overly excited by technology. Its overuse can distract learners rather than helping them to learn. Used together with other teaching tools like whiteboards, OHP transparencies and supported by appropriate teaching-learning strategies, PowerPoint presentations only then can be an effective tool to enhance learning.

References:

Atherton, J.S. (2001). Learning and Teaching [Online] Available: <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/~jamesa/teaching/lecture.htm> Accessed 10 September 2003.

Teach-nology Inc. (2003). Powerpoint in the Classroom: What's all the hype? [Online] <http://www.teach-nology.com/tutorials/powerpoint/> Accessed 10 September 2003.

Malaysia and Indonesia: Through Biodiversity Exploration in Kayan Mentarang National Park



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Between April 1st to 30th 2003, a joint survey expedition on Biodiversity of Kayan Mentarang National Park, Kalimantan was done by Indonesian and Malaysian scientists (N 04 00 39.7, E 115 46 24.7). This expedition was jointly organized by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), Ministry of Forestry Indonesia, WWF Indonesia and TOTAL Foundation. The expedition was collaborated by 35 scientists from University of Mulawarman Indonesia, Bogor Botany Institute, Kalimantan Forestry Research Institute, LIPI, Sabah Forestry Department, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Forestry Department of Sarawak and Unimas. Unimas was represented by Dr. Lee Nyanti and En Mohd. Azlan Jayasilan from the Faculty of Resource Science and Technology, who study fishes and mammals respectively.

Kayan Mentarang National Park (KMNP) is the second proposed trans-boundary protected area between Sabah, Sarawak and Kalimantan. Covering with 1.4 million hectares in width, the forest extends at the northern part of East Kalimantan Province. It comprises of hill dipterocarp forest and various levels of montane forest. The areas includes valleys and plateaus as well as the alignments of steep mountains formed from various sediments and volcanic formations between 200 m and 2000 m above sea level.

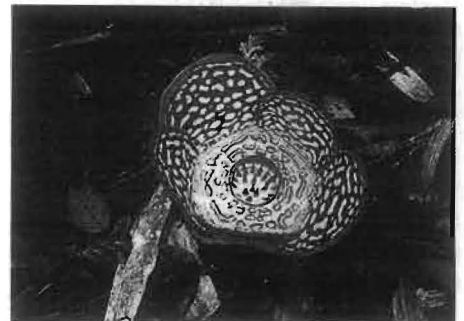
The major objectives for this joint expedition are, to increase the scientific co-operation between

to conduct a comprehensive biodiversity research in the selected area, and also to study the biodiversity index. In addition, it also contributes to the capacity building of the local communities and young scientists who are involved in the management of KMNP.

KMNP is also a preferred habitat for many charismatic and protected animal species, including wild cattle, (*Bos javanicus*), Malayan sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*), clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*), kubung (*Cynocephalus variegates*) and many interesting small mammals. Gibbon (*Hylobates muelleri*) and Gray lotong (*Presbytis hosei*) were also recorded in this park.

The interesting finding of this expedition was highlighted by the author when a new record was set for Indonesian biodiversity by discovering *Rafflesia pricei*. This species is relatively common in Sabah but it is not recorded in Indonesia. This was highlighted in several media in Indonesia, which includes RCTV, Jakarta Post, Tarakan Radar, Kompas and Tribun Kaltim. This plant is a holoparasit which grows on the root of *Tetrastigma leucostaphyllum*, which is a climber that attaches itself to *Prunus* sp. a perennial tree at the study site. We also discovered a potentially new species or even a new genus of freshwater crab. According to Dr. Ir. Yusli Wardiatno, Department of Aquatic Environment & Resource Management, Faculty of Fisheries & Marine Science, Bogor

Agricultural University; this crab is closely associated with an endemic species of Tioman Island in Peninsular Malaysia. A potential, new species of fish was also recorded by the team, *Osteochilus* sp. which is closely associated with *Osteochilus pleurotaenia*.



Rafflesia pricei meijer

References:

ITTO, 2003. Scientific Report: Joint Biodiversity Expedition in Kayan Mentarang National Park, East Kalimantan 2003. Collaboration between the government of Indonesia, Malaysia and WWF Indonesia (unpublished).

Acknowledgement:

We would like to thank all the organizers and supporters of this expedition. We would like to extend my gratitude to our Vice Chancellor, Professor Datuk Yusuf Hadi and Dean of FSTS, Prof Dr. Murtedza Mohamed, for their encouragement and support. The participation in this expedition would not be possible without the help of En Mohd. Tajuddin Abdullah and Prof. Madya Dr. Alex Tuen.



Basic Design Tips for Digital Publishing



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The first few introductions will focus on helping you to get the right software design tools along with the useful tips, techniques, strategies and site references to help you improve your digital publication projects. Then, we'll get into the basic explanation of good layout and design, graphic format, flash animation, web typography and total page size in web design.

Which software should you use?

Adobe and **Macromedia** are professional graphic products, which are widely in used apart from other art products that come along similarly.

Generally, **Adobe Photoshop**, **Adobe Illustrator** and **Macromedia Dreamweaver** are tools and features that are available in each application for designing web pages while Macromedia Flash is a professional standard authoring tool for producing high-impact web experiences and animation.

As for desktop publishing, **Adobe InDesign**, **Adobe Pagemaker** or **QuarkXPress** are few essential optional softwares recommended.

:: **Adobe Photoshop** provides tools for creating and manipulating static images, painting, transforming, retouching, optimizing images, working with colour and many more for image editing purposes.
http://www.teamphotoshop.com/photoshop/tutorials/ps_tut.php
<http://www.sifoo.com/v4/psd/index.php>
http://www.design.iastate.edu/LABS/pc_tutorials/photoshop/homepage.html

As for desktop publishing, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Pagemaker or QuarkXPress are few essential optional softwares recommended

:: **Adobe Illustrator** provides much more user-friendly tool for vector-graphic drawing apart from transforming, retouching, working with colour and other image editing purposes.

<http://www.sifoo.com/v4/ai/index.php>
<http://www.adobe.com/products/tips/illustrator.html>

:: **Adobe InDesign** is a professional publishing and solution for creating graphics intensive documents. InDesign provides with the industrial-strength support needed to maintain precise graphics standards.
<http://www.adobe.com/products/tips/indesign.html>

:: **Adobe Pagemaker** creates a wide variety of publications from simple one-page flyers to complex reports. It also helps to build publications from scratch and offer design templates to modify according to needs.
<http://www.adobe.com/products/tips/pagemaker.html>

:: **QuarkXPress** has been widely being used in the market-industry for publishing utility. It offers similar tools

Do keep the alignment of main text to the left, and not centered because center-aligned text is best used in headlines

compared to Adobe InDesign and Pagemaker basically.

<http://www.digitrain.com/Tips/home.htm#Tips>

http://www.design.iastate.edu/LABS/mac_tutorials/quarkxpress/qx0001.html

:: **Macromedia Dreamweaver** is a professional HTML editor for visually designing and managing web sites and pages. It provides space for layout contents and images from any type of format, e.g. *.gif / *.jpeg / *.swf. Thus making it simple to use and navigate from the tools provided.

<http://www.sifoo.com/v4/dw/index.php>

<http://www.digitrain.com/Tips/home.htm#Tips>

:: **Macromedia Flash** is a powerful web application tool for animation for creating animated logos, web site navigation controls, long-form animations, or entire Flash Web sites.

http://www.teamphotoshop.com/flash_tut.php

<http://www.sifoo.com/v4/fla/index.php>

<http://www.flashkit.com/tutorials/index.php>

Layout & Design

Layout and design are subjective topic; however, the important thing is to make sure that there is a layout. Below is some general guidelines to follow:

- + split your information into logical sections
- + make sure the starting page is attractive and are well laid out
- + have a consistent theme throughout the entire site
- + use colours, styles and fonts that complement each other

The important rule in web design is the web site should be easy to read. Make sure the text and background colors are carefully chosen. The colour used for the backgrounds

should not be unclear to the text colour or else it would be hard to read. For example, dark-colored text on a light-colored background is easier to read than light-colored text on a dark-colored background.

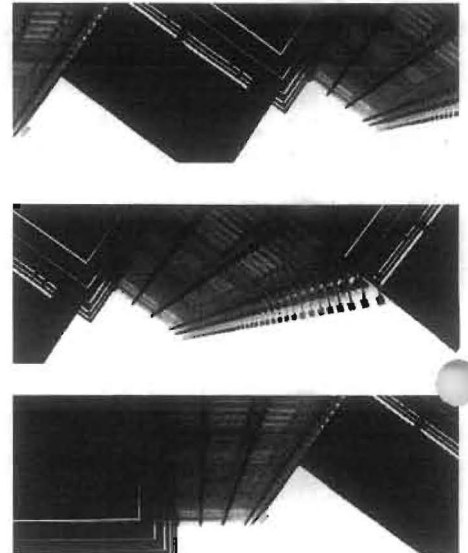
As for text size, do not set the size too small (hard to read) or too large (capitalized letters may appear as if shouting at visitors). Do keep the alignment of main text to the left, and not centered because center-aligned text is best used in headlines. Most text is left aligned as eyes routinely reading focus from left to right.

Graphic Format

Using GIFs and JPEGs format in web site design. GIF stands for Graphics Interchange Format. The advantage of GIF is that it is supported by practically all web browsers, which can be included in transparent backgrounds. However, the disadvantages are that it can only support 8-bit color or a palette at 256 colors. Besides, photographs saved as GIFs can lose their detail pixels resulting poor dithering. JPEG stands for **Joint Photographers Experts Group**. JPEG is better in rendering color and detail found in photographs or graphics using blends, gradients and other tonal variations. It also provides greater compression options (Low, Medium, High, and Maximum) allowing designer the better balance between quality and file size.

The disadvantage is that JPEG do not allow for transparent backgrounds, so you may have to leave the background of the image the same color as the background of a page, or have a border around the image.

When selecting GIF or JPEG for graphics conversion, it is important to consider the type of image you will be working with. Use GIF format if your graphic consists primarily of line art or flat colors without gradients.





Make an effort to keep your web site fresh. If a site remains dull, people will stop visiting it again, but if there is always something new, people will often drop by just to see what's changed.

JPEG-converted graphics are best for photographs or images with fine tonal variations colors, such as images with gradients or metallic images. Choosing the right file format is not only important for quality, but also keeping the image file size to a minimum possible.

Flash Animation

Macromedia *Flash* is used to create high impact web sites, alive with animations, sounds, interactive interfaces and powerful graphics. *Flash* uses compact vector graphic format, so *Flash* animations can be download quickly. In fact, *Flash* has a huge market penetration, making it an ideal choice for web site purposes.

The emerging alternative to GIF animation is *Flash* animation. It provides the ability to deliver more dynamic moving picture. However, a disadvantage of *Flash* animations is that of somehow limiting transparency possibilities.

Flash requires a plug-in, thus Macromedia has make the *Flash* plug-in standard for most people to download the *Flash Player* for their browser. If you run at least *Internet Explorer 5.0* browser, no plug-in may be required. The format for *Flash* is SWF file and it has being integrated into web design, graphic applications and it's becoming easier and faster for web designers and developers to learn and use. An increasingly popular use for *Flash* is the banner advertisement. You can display a *Flash*-based ad on any given page or in a separate small browser window. You can make the ad play once or loop and when done the window can be closed using action script command.

Web Typography/typeface

Applying different fonts and typefaces in web site design is not as simple as it is in print design. For example, if you want your web pages' text to display in the

typeface *Avant Garde*, you must have the *Avant Garde* typeface installed in your computers. If your visitors do not have this typeface, your web pages will look different than what you want it to be. The only way to have a typeface display exactly as you wants it to appear on a web page, you must put the typeface in a graphic image. However, if you wish to have a typeface in the text of your web pages, do use the most common typefaces which is already installed on your computers. The most common serif typefaces are *Times* and *Times New Roman*. The most common sans serif typefaces are *Arial*, *Helvetica*, and *Verdana*.

Total page size

One of the most frustrating things for a person browsing the web, is waiting for a site to load. Yes, do make sure that your site is relatively quick to load, no matter what you put on it. A main page shouldn't be more than 50KB or so. This, under normal conditions, will load the page in a few seconds, but still allow some fairly good use of graphics. One way of keeping the file sizes down, but retaining the freedom to use graphics to create a good design, is to be aware of the different kinds of graphic formats, and knowing how to use them. Keep it fresh. Make an effort to keep your web site fresh. If a site remains dull, people will stop visiting it again, but if there is always something new, people will often drop by just to see what's changed. You might want to think about doing a complete site redesign every few months, as it not only keeps it fresh but helps to improve your site as time goes on.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, getting the right design tools along with the useful site references to get across the underlying basic design tips is necessary for people who wish to do and keep their graphic and web design knowledge sharp and up-to-date.



Academic Quality Assurance

an Update of Events



Assoc. Prof. Dr Gabriel Tonga Noweg gtnoweg@calm.unimas.my

The Academic Quality Assurance (AQA) staff members at CALM have been put to task to coordinate activities related to academic quality on campus. Due to the currently hectic academic schedule, activities related to Academic Quality Assurance have been somewhat reduced, and it has been confined to conducting follow-ups on database compilation with various faculties and centers. A briefing session with the faculty members from the Faculty of Economics and Business was done on September 3rd, to introduce and explain to them on how to start creating their faculty database for the audit process.

There are a few notable developments on the Academic Quality Assurance initiative, on the national level:

a. National Seminar on Malaysian Qualifications Framework

The Quality Assurance Division (of the Higher Education Department, Ministry of Education) hosted a seminar recently, from 30th June to 2nd July, 2003, at Putrajaya Marriot Hotel, Selangor Darul Ehsan. The representatives from Unimas to this seminar were Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gabriel Tonga Noweg (Deputy Dean, CALM) and Prof. Azib Salleh (Director, Postgraduate Studies).

The purpose of the seminar was to clarify the various concepts and principles which formed the basis for the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). The seminar was also geared towards soliciting feedback and recommendations for

further improvement of MQF, and to discuss future plans of action. This seminar was seen as a timely event, as all public universities are now in the process of solidifying our effort to upgrade the quality of our academic programs across the country. When completed, the MQF will be one of the basis upon which academic programs will be evaluated. In brief, the MQF will secure the standards of qualifications, and it will reinforce policies on quality assurance; it will ensure accuracy and consistency of nomenclature of qualifications; MQF will also support flexible education by providing typical learning pathways and recognizing prior learning (RPL); it encourages partnerships between public and private sector, and it will link non-degree with undergraduate and postgraduate levels; and it will also encourage parity of esteem among academic, professional and vocational qualifications. The MQF will be a tool to establish a common currency for credit accumulation and transfer; it will provide clear and accessible public information; facilitates, where applicable, the presentation of the intended outcomes of qualifications in forms that enable professional bodies to gauge their contribution to professional formation, and it will articulate links with qualifications from other countries. The MQF will be sufficiently flexible to accommodate new kinds of qualification that may arise from time to time.

b. Quality Assurance Division Website

The Quality Assurance Division of the

Higher Education Department, at the Ministry of Education has just recently launched their departmental website. The website will provide a source of reference on various matters related to academic quality. It will also serve as a medium of communication and exchange on matters related to academic quality assurance between public universities in Malaysia and the Higher Education Department, MOE. The address is:
<http://www.kpm.netmyne.com/qad>

c. Internal Auditing Exercise

Recently, a meeting with all Deputy Deans (Undergraduate Studies and Student Development) was held to discuss issues on AQA. One of the core agenda of the meeting is to provide and gather updated reports from the various faculties and centres, on their progress in preparing their departmental databases and self-evaluation studies. The meeting had revealed that most faculties are almost ready with their AQA documents. The deadline for draft submission has been set on the 30th September, 2003.

An Internal Auditing exercise will commence at the end of this year, and this exercise will begin with the Faculty of Social Sciences, followed by the Faculty of Resource Science & Technology and the Faculty of Engineering. The same sequence of rotation for audit exercise will be used when the external auditors come to our university in 2004 for the formal audit process.

d. External Audit Exercise

The external audit exercise for all Unimas academic programs will commence in 2004. Auditors will be appointed by the Quality Assurance Division of the Higher Education Department, and these auditors will conduct the task on campus. During

the evaluation process, both staff and students from each faculty/centre will be involved in some of the evaluation phases. The external audit will determine the level of compliances of our academic programs, in terms of the set Standards of Quality based on MQF. Hence, as a member of the

academic community on campus, we should seriously put our best foot forward and try to contribute positively at our respective faculties or centers.

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Memorable times
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Scenes from
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with our beloved
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